

## POLICY BRIEF

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview Scrutiny Committee

01 December 2021



### GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

#### Government

##### [Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021](#)

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, presented his Autumn Budget and Spending Review (SR21) to Parliament on Wednesday 27 October. Mr Sunak confirmed that core spending power for councils is estimated to increase by an average of 3% in real-terms each year over the SR21 period. The Chancellor is providing councils with £4.8 billion of new grant funding over the SR21 period for social care and other services. Headline announcements for Plymouth include:

- £19.9 million expansion of the George Park and Ride site in Plymouth through the Levelling Up fund - one of only six in the south west to be announced.
- Up to £50,000 to develop early-stage proposals to reinstate passenger rail links between Tavistock and Plymouth through the Restoring Your Railway 'Ideas Fund'.
- Up to £90 million for new Community Forests in England - including in Plymouth and South Devon.

The Chancellor's speech can be found [here](#).

##### [Plans to drive levelling up agenda](#)

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The change in name reflects the continuing focus the Government is placing on its flagship Levelling Up agenda.

##### [£200 million boost to help level up communities across the UK](#)

The Government has announced the successful bids for the UK Community Renewal Fund. The two successful bids for Plymouth are the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (£655,873) and Stonehouse Union (£542,893).

#### Local Government

##### [Council financial sustainability and the section 114 regime](#)

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has published a government response to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's report on local authority financial sustainability and the section 114 regime published on 19 July 2021.

The report includes responses to a number of recommendations on social care, funding, COVID-19, commercial investment and audit and control.

#### Housing and Homelessness

##### [Funding allocated to local areas via the Brownfield Land Release Fund \(BLRF\)](#)

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has announced that almost £58m from the £75m Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) has been allocated to 53 councils to develop brownfield land into housing. The £75m BLRF includes £25m for self and custom build projects, of which £5m has already been allocated. Councils are being encouraged to bid for the remaining share of £20m. Plymouth has received £177,000 for Victoria place.

##### [New duties for councils to provide support in safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims](#)

New regulations and guidance set out the level of support councils are required to provide including:

- A clear expectation that expert specialist support is provided to victims in safe accommodation that best supports their needs, whether in refuges or other safe housing.
- Guidance that states B&Bs or mixed homeless hostels are not the right place for victims to recover from abuse.
- Councils will support to victims to stay in their own homes, if the perpetrator has left and the home can be made safe

Councils will have to work with partners such as police and local domestic abuse charities and publish strategies on how they will provide support to victims who need safe accommodation by January 2022. A National Expert Steering Group led by the Minister with responsibility for homelessness and domestic abuse

and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will monitor the progress of authorities in implementing these changes.

#### [£65 million support package for vulnerable renters](#)

Vulnerable renters struggling due to the impact of the pandemic will be helped by a £65 million support package. The funding will be given to councils to support low-income earners in rent arrears in their area.

#### [Government announces support for rough sleepers over winter](#)

Rough sleepers will be helped into safe and warm accommodation and treatment services for drug and alcohol dependency this winter, supported by an extra £66 million the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced today. [Plymouth has been awarded £165,500 via the Rough Sleeping Drug & Alcohol Treatment Grant.]

#### [Support enforcing the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard \(MEES\) Regulations.](#)

£4.3 million of extra funding from the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is designed to support an extra 100,000 engagements with the most difficult to reach landlords with the worst performing properties. The money will support measures to raise awareness of the rules and free property surveys, as well as enhanced and targeted mail reminders and translation services to reach those not currently complying. Plymouth is one of the 59 local authorities who were successful and have been allocated funding.

### **Finance and Welfare**

#### [Local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges](#)

Guidance for local authorities on how to access the local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges as a result of COVID-19.

#### [Chancellor sets new standards for environmental reporting to weed out greenwashing and support transition to a greener financial system](#)

The Chancellor has introduced new requirements for businesses to set out their green credentials to potential investors. The rules will also apply to pension schemes, investment products and asset managers and owners and are part of the Government's reforms to create a greener financial system. [Greening Finance: A Roadmap to Sustainable](#) has been published.

#### [The Department for Education \(DfE\) cost of school uniform guidance.](#)

The Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniform) Bill has been amended and new guidance published requiring schools to make uniform affordable for all. Schools are required to make uniform affordable and parents get the best value for money.

#### [Adult personal social services: specific revenue funding and grant allocations - 2021 to 2022](#)

A letter on routine annual social care funding to local authorities for the financial year 2021 to 2022 states that Plymouth has been allocated £184,010 via a Local Reform and Community Voices 2021 to 2022 grant and £347,945 War Pensions via a Disregard Grant 2021 to 2022.

### **Environment**

#### [Environment Act becomes law](#)

The new legislation will improve air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, halt the decline of species, and improve our natural environment. These changes will be driven by new legally binding environmental targets, and enforced by a new, independent Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), which will hold government and public bodies to account on their environmental obligations.

#### [Free workshops for elected members on investing in walking and cycling infrastructure and projects](#)

The Department for Transport (DfT) is offering a programme of free workshops between November 2021 and January 2022, for elected members and combined authority mayors in England (outside London) on investing in walking and cycling infrastructure and projects to make neighbourhoods more liveable. The workshops will be delivered by Sustrans and Healthy Streets.